DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 925 HE 025 762

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TITLE The Stages of the Doctoral Career: Socialization and Its Consequences.
PUB DATE 20 Apr 92
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992). For related document, see HE 025 763.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; Comparative Analysis; *Doctoral Programs; *Graduate Study; Higher Education; Interpersonal Relationship; Peer Relationship; Research; Skill Development; *Student College Relationship; *Student Development; Student Experience; *Student Reaction; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS University of Illinois

ABSTRACT

This study compared doctoral students at three stages of their graduate career in the areas of relations with faculty, relations with peers, emphases of classes and other program experiences, personal gains due to the program, and attitudes toward the program. A sample of 596 doctoral students at the University of Illinois (Chicago) were surveyed in 1991. Analysis revealed that more advanced doctoral students reported greater access to faculty, closer working relations, and greater value from their interactions with faculty. They also reported greater involvement with other graduate students and in research. They also indicated less involvement with people, concern for interpersonal issues, obtaining information from others, using gut feelings, and a narrowing of cultural interests. More advanced students were also more positive about the clarity and value of their experiences in their programs, and indicated greater gains in gathering and testing information, while simultaneously expressing less interest in listening with an open mind. The results support the idea that doctoral education consists of different stages, each with its characteristic intellectual and interpersonal demands and opportunities. Contains 13 references. (GLR)

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THE STAGES OF THE DOCTORAL CAREER: SOCIALIZATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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HE 025 762

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The Stages of the Doctoral Career: Socialization and its Consequences

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Doctoral education has been described as a process of socialization to an ultimate professional role (Baird, 1990; Stein and Weidman, 1990). This process involves learning the " . . . specialized knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, norms, and interests of the profession" (Bragg, 1976). The graduate faculty is the critical agent conducting this socialization, serving as definers of knowledge and disciplinary values, models of the roles of academics in the discipline, and producers of practical help and advice (Stein and Weidman, 1990). The other socialization agency, although seldom given formal recognition, is the graduate student peer group (Baird, 1990; Tinto, 1991). Thus, socialization at the graduate level would appear to involve processes similar to those at the undergraduate level described as academic and social integration (Tinto, 1987, 1991). However, the meaning of these concepts at the graduate level is quite different, and varies with the stages of the academic career (Baird, 1972; 1990; Katz, 1976; Tinto, 1991). That is, as doctoral students progress through their programs they become integrated into their institution, their department, and their discipline. Since the tasks and demands of different stages of the doctoral career differ, the relations of doctoral students with faculty and other students also differ. As students progress through their programs, they are assimilated more and more into the life of the department and discipline, thereby gaining greater access to and closer interactions with faculty (Baird, 1972; Tinto, 1991). Those at the beginning of their programs are still learning the expectations and demands upon them and are thus somewhat distant from faculty. Those at the dissertation stage, who have served their apprenticeships and are socialized to the norms and methods of the discipline are expected to work closely with faculty. Likewise, students at the beginning of their programs may see other students as unknown quantities or as competitors, in contrast to those at later stages who see other students as part of a departmental community (Lozoff, 1976; Baird, 1990).

The demands and opportunities of the coursework and other program requirements also change over the course of graduate study. In general, the coursework and requirements come to increasingly emphasize the norms and methods of the discipline (Katz, 1976). This emphasis on particular techniques and ideas is at the heart of socialization to the discipline. In general, the emphasis is on being an observer, independently using methods the discipline considers elegant, and delimiting constructs to fit the dominant approaches in the discipline (Taylor, 1976; Baird, 1990). However, in the process of focusing on one intellectual approach to knowing, other approaches need to be rejected, usually those that depend on or relate to other people (the key feature of academic work is "objectivity" and "independence") or on "unintellectual" approaches, such as "intuition" (Taylor, 1976; Lozoff, 1976; Baird, 1990).

There have been several attempts to describe the stages of the graduate career, with rather different intentions and theoretical

perspectives. However, they tend to fit into a general framework, described later. Katz (1976), whose main interest was the personality development of graduate students, particularly the interaction between intellectual growth and personal development, described the course of graduate students through their studies. The entering students go through a period of insecurity during which their sense of mastery is severely challenged. This sense of inadequacy is enhanced by an idealistic image of the discipline and professors. Students at this stage see themselves as being very far from meeting the ideal. However this stage is followed by a period of active coping during which the work is gradually seen as more manageable. Simultaneously, coursework, discussions with peers and more advanced students, as well as interactions with faculty in and out of class, lead to a more realistic view of the demands of the discipline and of professors. Gradually students develop reasonably realistic professional identities. However, Katz emphasizes that the mastery of the preferred epistomological and methodological systems of the discipline leads to a constricted view of reality. The intense mastery of one area can lead students to confine their thinking to the categories favored by the field of study. Eventually, however, many students also grasp the tentative hypothetical nature of knowledge and the changing multiplicity of reality. This tension between the constraining forms of the discipline and the need for alternative creative views of one's subject is prevalent both in the late years of graduate study and throughout the eventual careers of scholars. Katz describes other tensions that characterize the later stages of graduate study. These include the tension between submitting to the authority of the students' professors and the need for autonomy. This tension is sometimes demonstrated in departmental policies. For example, some departments are very flexible in terms of course and experiential requirements, while others construct and enforce very strict rules and regulations. Another important tension pits the ideal of the disinterested, and somewhat unworldly scholar versus "careermanship." Again, this is a tension that students may experience throughout their careers.

Tinto (1991) has been concerned with understanding the factors in student persistence in doctoral studies. He proposed three general stages: transition to membership in graduate communities, attaining candidacy through the development of competence, and the active research stage. In the first stage students seek membership in the academic and social communities of their department, and determine whether the norms of those communities are consonant with their own. In the second stage, the emphasis turns to developing recognized competencies. The student's competence is judged by the students' peers and professors, based on interactions within and beyond the classroom. During the last stage, which corresponds to the period during which the dissertation is written, the behavior of a specific faculty member, the major professor, assumes paramount importance. For some students, external commitments to family and work become more important at this stage than they were earlier. Aid and assistantships play a role in persistence as well, although it is a far from simple one.

A model of the <u>processes</u> rather than the stages of doctoral careers is based on analyses of the ways graduate students learn the forms of

discourse of their discipline (Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman, 1991). The central task facing entering graduate students is to master new ways of speaking, reading and writing that are the norm in the disciplinary and departmental community they are entering. As summarized by Berkentotter, Huckin and Ackerman, the model is based on the following:

> "1. Member of a research community share a "model of knowing." This model of knowing is embedded in the research methodology that incoming students in graduate programs learn, and is encoded in the language that community members use.
>
> 2. A research community extends beyond a student's graduate school to include researchers at other institutions. The vanguard of these researchers constitutes an "invisible college" wherein they share their work with one another through publications in professional journals and through papers delivered at professional meetings.
>
> 3. Papers and publications are among a research community's communicative forums; significant issues are raised, defined, and debated within these forums. In this sense, to publish and be cited is to enter the community's discourse.
>
> 4. Graduate students are initiated into the research community through the reading and writing they do, through instruction in research methodology, and through interaction with faculty and with their peers. A major part of this initiation process is learning how to use appropriate written linguistic conventions for communicating through disciplinary forums." (p. 193)

These processes of entering the community involve acquiring genre knowledge and joining the conversation among researchers in the field. For example, Swales and Najjar (1987) have analyzed the ways in which research articles are written based on the anticipated reactions of peer-colleagues. Students learn to make these anticipations though interactions with faculty as well as by following the models for articles that are available in the literature. Thus, students learn to speak, write and think like the members of their discipline, as represented initially by their professors and later by other members in the discipline encountered directly in meetings and colloquia, and indirectly through journal articles, books, etc. The incorporation of these community-defining forms of thinking and discourse into the dissertation and other research efforts plays a vital part in the general process of socialization to the professional role.

Although based on different theoretical viewpoints, these different conceptions of graduate student socialization emphasize the importance of several aspects of the graduate experience. These include the agencies of socialization which define the definitions of the role to be mastered, and the standards of performance to be met (the faculty), and which develop coping strategies for mastering the definitions and meeting the standards (graduate student peers). Both of these agencies

also offer interpersonal support and rewards. Thus, as students move through the program and are more completely socialized, they should become closer to their professors and peers, professionaly and personally.

As students master the norms and forums of discourse in their discipline, they are empowered with the skills that are emphasized and are also given more opportunities to exercise their mastery. These changes should be shown in two ways: students should report increasing exercise of their mastery in their program experiences, especially in the forms of reasoning which the disciplinary community emphasizes; they should also report gains in their own ability to use these conceptual tools. Simultaneously, following Katz and Baird, they should report a narrowing of experiences, and little growth in more general intellectual areas.

The study described in this paper compares doctoral students at three stages of the graduate career in the areas of relations with faculty, relations with peers, emphases of classes and other program experiences, personal gains due to the program, and attitudes toward the program, in an attempt to understand and explicate the stages of the graduate career. The results support a model of the course of doctoral study (Baird, 1990; Tinto, 1991).

Method

Sample. The sample consisted of 596 doctoral students at the University of Illinois, Chicago who were surveyed in the Spring of 1991. Analyses comparing respondents on major, age, gender, and nationality suggested the respondents were reasonably representative of the total group. Respondents were classified into three groups: 125 students who had not yet completed the preliminary qualifying examinations; 236 who had completed all requirements, but had not begun their dissertation work; and 235 who were working on their dissertations. The Graduate Student Survey included items concerning factors in the choice of graduate study and of UIC, sources of information, satisfaction with various aspects of the campus, impediments to the degree, reports of different experiences, the emphases or opportunities of the program, the sense of gain in several academic and intellectual areas, accomplishments in graduate school, demographic data, and time expenditures. (The theoretical rationale behind these variables is given in Baird and Smart, 1991).

Analyses. The percentage or mean responses across the three groups to each item were compared, using exploratory data analysis techniques (Hoaglin, Mosteller, and Tukey, 1983). (In addition, scales that are currently being constructed will be used to provide more precise comparisons. The results of these analyses will be presented in a later version of the paper.)

Results

Relations with Faculty. More advanced doctoral students reported greater access to faculty, closer working relations, and greater value from their interactions with faculty. Specifically, they reported spending much more time with faculty out of class (and not related to

assistantship work), and more often reported that faculty were available for consultation, that there were opportunities for mentoring, and that nonclassroom interaction with faculty had a positive influence on their intellectual growth, career goals, and personal growth. More pragmatically, they more often reported that their advisor helped them obtain financial support for their research.

Relations with Peers. More advanced students reported greater involvement with other graduate students, both individually and collectively. Specifically, they reported more close personal relationships with other graduate students and a higher level of participation in departmental social activities.

Tables 1-5 about here

Emphases of Classes and Other Program Experiences. As students advanced through graduate school, they appear to experience changing demands and opportunities. Generally, more advanced students reported more opportunities to exercise a variety of academic and intellectual skills. Simultaneously, however, they also reported a narrowing of interests and a rejection of alternative ways of knowing. Specifically, they reported more emphasis on dealing with technical tasks, developing inductive and deductive reasoning, developing theoretical understandings, and developing the ability to solve problems. They also reported greater involvement in research. Simultaneously, however, they also reported less involvement with people, concern for interpersonal issues, obtaining information from others, using "gut" feelings, and a narrowing of cultural interests.

Personal Gains Due to Program. When the students were asked about their sense of progress toward various skills and competencies due to their program, there was a very similar pattern to that just described. Specifically, more advanced students reported greater gains in gathering information, organizing information, building conceptual models, experimenting with new ideas, testing theories and ideas, designing experiments, choosing the best solution to problems, analyzing data, and making decisions. Simultaneously, however, they reported less sensitivity to other's values, and less interest in listening with an open mind.

Views of Program. More advanced graduate students were more positive about the clarity and value of their experiences in their programs. Specifically, more advanced students were more satisfied with the size of classes, the time required for out of class assignments, and the clarity of requirements. They were also more satisfied with their progress and development in the department.

Discussion

In general, these results tend to support the idea that doctoral education consists of different stages, each with its characteristic intellectual and interpersonal demands and opportunities. These results support both Katz's (1976) stages of idealism and assimilation, realism

and sophistication, and autonomy and research, and Tinto's (1991) "Transition to membership in graduate communities," "Attaining candidacy: the development of competency," and "Completing the dissertation: the research stage." Which is more appropriate remains for further research. However, this study, consistent with a good many others (e.g., see those reviewed in Baird, 1990), indicates that the role of faculty in the lives of students, both collectively and individually, changes from one that is not dramatically different from undergraduate education to one that emphasizes interaction and mentoring of academic professionals in the making. During this process the students in this study seemed to be encouraged to assimilate the academic norms of their disciplines as evidenced by the opportunities and activities emphasized in their programs and their sense of gain (Stein and Weidman, 1990). However, consistent with earlier work (Taylor, 1976; Baird, 1990), this socialization to academic values also entails the emphasis of intellect and independence over interpersonal interaction and intuition. It is important for graduate educators to decide whether these are the effects they desire, and, if other outcomes are preferred, how to attain them.

This study is limited by the fact that it is based on a single institution and is based on cross-sectional rather than longitudinal data. However, the project is designed to obtain longitudinal data in the next few years. This additional data will allow a more analysis which should lead to further insights into the stages of the doctoral career as well as a more precise testing of different models of the stages.

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Table 1

Graduate Students' Reactions to Faculty by Stage

	Beginning	Mid-course	Advanced
I'm dissatisfied with the opportunity to meet and interact informally with faculty members	31	28	29
Nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had a positive influence on my personal growth	33	48	55
Departmental faculty are available for individual consultation	56	55	64
Departmental faculty are genuinely interested in graduate students	57	57	55
Departmental faculty are capable teachers	63	59	51
Departmental faculty are open to new ideas	53	52	47
My advisor has helped me obtain an assistantship or other financial support for my research	44	49	59
I've had little opportunity to develop a mentoring relationship with a faculty member	38	31	23
Nonclassroom interaction with faculty have had a positive influence on my career goals & aspirations	50	54	63
Nonclassroom interaction with faculty have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth	43	54	66

Figures show percentage of each group indicating "Agree" or "Strongly Agree."

Table 2

Graduate Students' Relations with Other Students by Stage

	Begin-ning	Mid-course	Advanced
I've frequently met informally with other graduate students in study groups	38	35	39
I've seldom participated in departmental social activities	54	46	38
I've not developed close personal relationships with other graduate students	34	33	26
I'm satisfied with my social life in the department	44	39	49

Figures show percentage of each group indicating "Agree" or "Strongly Agree."

Table 3

Graduate Students' Reports of the Learning Opportunities in Their Programs by Stage

	Begin-ning	Mid-course	Advanced
Dealing with technical tasks and problems rather than social and interpersonal issues	37	50	53
Generating a wide range of ideas (e.g., brainstorming)	45	45	50
Assimilating disparate observations into an integrated explanation	50	41	52
Developing inductive reasoning abilities	51	51	65
Developing risk taking and intuitive "trial and error" problem solving strategies	41	42	41
Examining concrete situations from many different points of view & developing a meaningful "gestalt"	42	35	44
Developing broad cultural interests	36	25	26
Observing and reflecting rather than acting	40	35	38
Developing hypothetical-deductive reasoning abilities	48	50	63
Developing imaginative abilities (e.g., creativity)	37	33	43
Learning primarily from "hands-on" experiences	35	36	42
Being involved in individual or collaborative research	50	55	69
Identifying a single correct answer to problems	18	17	25
Being actively involved rather than thinking reflectively	33	27	37
Adapting ideas to specific situations	50	45	52
Being involved with things rather than people	21	29	31

Table 3 (cont.)

Being aware of meaning and values	46	38	51
Developing "gut" feelings rather than logical soundness	17	12	7
Obtaining information from other people rather than your own technical analysis	30	26	23
Focusing on the logical soundness of theories rather than their practical value	32	33	41
Developing a theoretical understanding of phenomena	60	61	67
Applying ideas and theories to practice	56	58	60
Examining the logical consistency and precision of theories	53	49	55
Dealing with abstract ideas and concepts as opposed to people	49	48	40
Developing the ability to solve problems and make decisions	55	55	64
Becoming exposed to the history and philosophical assumptions of my field	59	54	61
Reading extensively the literature in my field	65	70	73
Participating in class discussion	73	67	70
Working cooperatively on group projects	36	35	40
Making presentations to my peers	55	61	65

Figures show percentage rating each item a '4' or '5' on the extent to which their programs had provided opportunities for each kind of experience, where 1 = None at all, and 5 = A great deal.

Table 4

Graduate Students' Sense of Gain in Competence by Stage

	Beginning	Mid-course	Advance
Experimenting with new ideas	25	30	39
Organizing information	22	33	36
Committing yourself to objectives	26	26	34
Building conceptual models	22	29	34
Listening with an open mind	34	28	33
Being sensitive to people's feelings	25	17	25
Setting goals	25	29	32
Analyzing quantitative data	33	42	48
Imagining implications of ambiguous situations	14	17	17
Being personally involved	20	19	26
Creating new ways of thinking and doing	23	22	31
Choosing the best solutions to problems	15	20	25
Designing experiments	16	28	39
Being sensitive to other's values	25	16	22
Testing theories and ideas	19	26	35
Gathering information	30	41	45
Making decisions	17	24	28
Influencing and leading others	15	15	22
Dealing with people	23	16	21
Seeking and exploiting opportunities	17	17	22

Figures show percentage reporting "very much" progress as a result of their programs.

Table 5

Graduate Students' Views of Their Programs by Stage

	Beginning	Mid-course	Advanced
Course requirements are clearly specified	53	52	61
Additional requirements (residency, etc.) are vague	32	25	27
Degree requirements make logical sense	50	45	54
I'm dissatisfied with my intellectual development since enrolling in this department	24	18	17
I'm satisfied with my academic experiences in the department	63	64	60
I have performed academically as well as I anticipated I would	70	74	77
My coursework in general has been intellectually difficult	44	38	40
My out-of-class assignments have been excessively demanding of my time	45	31	26
In general my classes have been too large	15	17	10
Most of my courses have lacked intellectual stimulation	11	12	14
I feel I've been given an opportunity to show what I can do	55	61	60

Figures show percentages of "agree" and "strongly agree" responses.